

"Today" MARCH 25 NBC

PART II Second Day

WALTERS: Mr. Secretary, where do you stand on the controversy in the Anti-Ballistic Missile?

RUSK: When you have a very complicated question like the ABM question, the debate draws into itself a lot of ideas which...many of which are reasonable and well-founded, some of which are just plain nonsense. Now I'm afraid we've gotten quite a collection of pros and cons now focusing on the ABM problem. For example, I've heard it said that we mustn't do anything more about ABMs because this would somehow interfere with our negotiations with the Russians. Those who say that don't go ahead, and make the point that because the Russians are themselves deploying ABMs that we shouldn't talk to them. Now, we're prepared to talk with the Russians while they are deploying ABMs. I have no doubt the Russians will talk to us even though we are taking some additional steps in the ABM field. So this argument I think is just silly, just plain nonsense. The real question, seems to me is do we have from a scientific and technical point of view, a good horse to bet on? Do we have first class workable ABMs? If we don't have those, then let's put more in research and development until we have something that we think is worth deploying. Secondly, do we take decisions now which we would want to review if we got some agreement with the Russians? We ought not to make decisions now that could not be subject to review depending on what happens in the talks we have with the Russians, so that we don't prejudge or predispose those conversations. One of the problems, Barbara, is that our budget cycle in this country runs about 18 months in advance. So we're really debating what we do in

the budgetary year of 1971, thereabouts. Certainly 1970. If we have some way to say, "Now look, let's be in touch with the Russians and find out what is possible here, before we make final decisions on how much deployment we'll undertake," that would be, it seems to me, a preferable course of action. But I would not stop research and development. I would not stop what we're doing simply because we have some talks with the Russians coming up. They're not stopping what they're doing.

WALTERS: Well, then, do you think the decision for or against the ABMs should be made by the military or by the scientists rather than by Congress?

RUSK: No, I think it should be made by the President in consultation with Congress. It should be made by the civilian leadership of the country. There are differences of view in Congress about this. Of course, the Armed Services Committee has one view and the Foreign Relations Committee might have another. But I should think we should make some preliminary decisions about what we do now, then find out from the Russians what is possible in terms of an agreement, before we make any large and far-reaching and long-term and absolute commitments about the future. But if we were to abandon ABM and they go ahead, they just might get a technical or scientific breakthrough, that would make an enormous difference in the strategic relationship between the two sides. We can't afford to let that happen. So we have to keep our hand in it until we know what the agreements are going to be.

WALTERS: What are your views on what is occurring on the matter of the Pueblo?

RUSK: One has to be a little careful about something that is in effect before the courts, ~~but~~ certainly is under inquiry. In the case of the Pueblo, we were conscious of the fact that we were not putting a combat ship into operation. This ship did not have combat capability. It was very lightly armed, in fact, it was for all practical purposes unarmed. It was relying upon the freedom of the high seas, for its protection. We have used ships for such missions for many years, and aircraft on such missions for many years. So it was not unreasonable to believe that ~~the~~ the high seas would be adequate protection for a ship engaged in that kind of mission. That proved not to be the case. So I think it's important not to let a ... as the lawyers put it ... a poor case make bad law. I would be inclined, myself, to put the whole incident behind us, as an unfortunate matter from beginning to end. Draw such lessons as we can from it, in terms of what type ships we use, where we send them, what their instructions are, but not deal with this matter as though this were a cruiser, which had refused to give combat.

WALTERS: What about the ~~the~~ confessions of the men involved in Korea?

RUSK: We never took those very seriously because there was internal evidence in the confession that they were not saying what they really meant. There were many ways in which they could give us signals that what they were saying was blarney. But I myself was not particularly distressed by

the confessions because they carried on their face the obvious information that the confessions were phony. So they were sending messages to us through the confessions which let us know that they were falsifying.

WALTERS: Weren't you in somewhat the same position yourself?

RUSK: Well, yes, at the very end there when we got these men out, I authorized the signing of a confession accompanied by an oral statement saying this confession is no good, that this confession is false. Now, to me, this was a very distasteful kind of thing. I was surprised that the North Koreans accepted this curious arrangement; it's literally without precedent. But it did get the men back. And I was very much concerned to get the men back as quickly as possible. The testimony has shown the treatment they were receiving, so my conscience is reasonably clear about having gotten the men back.

WALTERS: And in general your advice would be that the whole situation be wiped out and that we learn from experience.

RUSK: Sort of take what lesson we can from it, but scrub it off and start over again.

WALTERS: Mr. Secretary, we have been talking primarily about the past, now I'd like to ask you some questions about the present. You saw President Kennedy take a good will trip to Latin America, to Europe, President Johnson to the Far East. How effective do you think trips like this -- I'm speaking also of President Nixon's recent trip -- how effective are they?

RUSK: I think one must distinguish between systematic negotiations at the summit, and visits which are in the nature of get-acquainted visits or visits to exchange regard for countries involved. Before I became

Secretary of State, I once wrote an article in which I said some very severe things about negotiations at the summit. This is because negotiations on important questions take time. And if you don't have time to spend on them, then you better stay out of them. And people at the summit don't have the time, the weeks, the months, that are required to resolve many of these questions. But, ~~unlike~~ visits of the sort that President Nixon recently took to Europe are constructive and helpful. They help to give the leaders some personal impression about who is on the other end of the cable. What kind of man am I dealing with? What can be established in terms of personal confidence to reinforce the traditional confidence between governments, and to lay the groundwork for further moves that might be taken through other normal diplomatic channels? So I have no objection to the kind of trip that President Nixon recently made, or that President Johnson made, and President Kennedy made. It's the idea that somehow chiefs of state should undertake laborious and difficult, and complicated and dangerous negotiations at that level that gives me some concern.

WALTERS: So you obviously would not be in favor of any summit meetings in the near future.

RUSK: If the summit meeting is to conclude a negotiation which had already been very well prepared, or was to launch a negotiation which would be followed up by regular diplomatic procedures, then I would have no objection to that. But the idea that people will try to get together and settle all at once

*a major and difficult problem is I think a little illusory, and I think we would be expecting too much if we would think that two leaders could meet and in one or two days time shake off some of the most difficult problems confronting the human race. So I'd be a little modest about negotiations, but very much in favor of the personal contact.*

*WALTERS: Would you care to comment on your views, your opinions, of President Nixon? So far, now that you are no longer in the official position?*

*RUSK: It seems to me that, in the foreign policy field, the President and new Secretary of State have gotten off to a good start. They've acted with care, with prudence, with responsibility. I felt, for example, that they remained calm during the recent nervousness about Berlin. I think they're thinking very hard about their problems and are not trying to produce instant flamboyant results. So although I'm on the other side of the aisle and a member of the Democratic party, I would have to say that I feel that they've gotten off to a good start.*

*WALTERS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. We're very appreciative.*